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A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
MIRACLES
OF OUR
SAVIOR,

In VIEW of the Present
Controversy between INFIDELS
and APOSTATES.

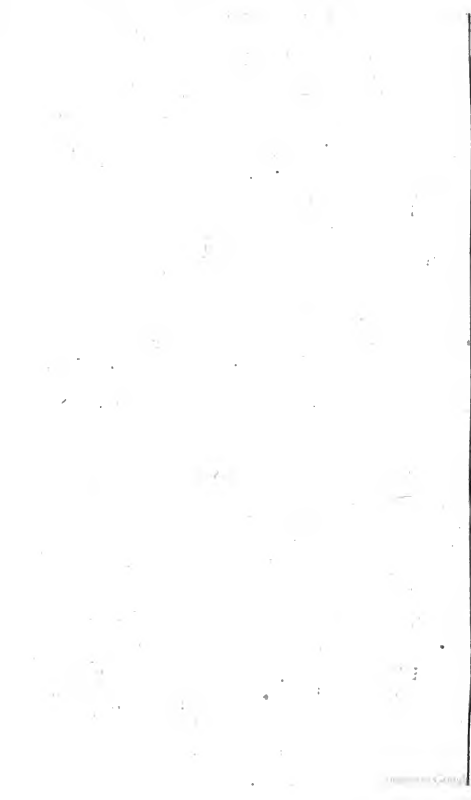
—*Nosstrum est tantas componere Lites.*

The SIXTH EDITION.

By THOMAS WOOLSTON, B. D.
Sometime Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

L O N D O N.

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TO THE
Right Reverend Father in GOD,
EDMUND,
Lord Bishop of LONDON.

MY LORD,



*PON no other View do I
make a Dedication of this
Discourse to your Lordship,
than to submit it to your a-
cute Judgment, expecting soon to hear
of your Approbation or Dislike of it.
If it so happen, that you highly ap-
prove of it, I beg of you to be sparing
of your Commendations, lest I should
be puff'd up with them.*

A 2

In

iv DEDICATION.

In my Moderator, some Expressions dropt from my Pen about the Miracles of our Saviour, which for want of Illustration then, gave your Lordship some Offence, and brought upon me more Trouble: But, having now fully and clearly explained myself out of the Fathers, I hope you'll be reconciled to me; and as you are a Lover of Truth, will, against Interest and Prejudice, yield to the Force of it.

Whether your Prosecution of me, for the Moderator, was just and reasonable, I'll not dispute here, having already expostulated that Matter with you in several Letters, to which you would not condescend to give me any Answer. For what Reason you was silent, is best known to your self. But, in my own Vindication, I hope, I may publish without Offence, that your taking me for an Infidel, was such

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such a Mistake, as I thought no Scholar could have made; and the Injury done to my Reputation and low Fortune, by the Prosecution, so considerable, that the least I expected from your Lordship, was a courteous Excuse, if not an ample Compensation, for it.

*As to the Expediency of prosecuting Infidels for their Writings (in whose Cause I am the farthest of any Man from being engaged) I will here say nothing. The Argument, pro and con, has already, by one or other, been copiously handled. And I don't know, but I might be, with your Lordship, on the persecuting Side of the Question; but that it looks as if a Man was distrustful of the Truth of Christianity, and conscious of his own Inability to defend it; or he would leave that good Cause to God himself, and the Sword of the Spirit, without calling
upon*

vi DEDICATION.

upon the Civil Magistrate for his Aid and Assistance.

That scurvy Writer of the Scheme of literal Prophecy, &c. which your Lordship must have heard of, would insinuate, that they are only atheistical Priests, who for fear of their Interests in the Church, set Persecutions on foot: But after your Lordship has publish'd a strenuous Defence of Christianity to the Purpose of our present Controversy, I'll have no such Suspicions of you.

Your Lordship's persecuting (or, if you will, prosecuting) Humour, is reputedly all pure Zeal for God's Glory; and, with all my Heart, let it be so accounted, whether it be according to Knowledge or not. Against Popery and Infidelity you are all Ardency! Who does not commend you? Who can question the Sincerity of the Zeal of a Pro-

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Protestant Bishop, and of a Protestant Clergy, when they persecute the Enemies of their Church, that considers their own Steadiness to Principles against Interest, under all Changes, since the Reformation; and their Abhorrence of Extortion on the People, for the Duties of their Function, in and about this City. Such Honesty and Constancy in their Profession, is a Proof of the Integrity of their Hearts, or I know not where to find one.

But that your Lordship's Zeal for Religion is very remarkable and successful, I could prove by many Instances; one is, that of your routing a turbulent Sect of Peripateticks out of St. Paul's Cathedral; and if you could as effectually clear Christ's Church of Infidels, what a glorious Bishop would you be!

And

viii DEDICATION.

And what Pity it is, that Infidels likewise are not to be quell'd with your Threats and Terrors! which (without the Weapons of sharp Reasonings, and thumping Arguments, that others are for the Use of) would transmit your Fame to Posterity, for a notable Champion for Christianity, as certainly as, that your judicious Prosecution of the Moderator for Infidelity is here remember'd by,

MY LORD,

The Admirer of

*London, April
17th 1727.*

Your Zeal,

Wisdom and

Conduct,

Thomas Woolston.



A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
MIRACLES
OF OUR
SAVIOUR, &c.

IF ever there was an useful Controversy started, or revived in this Age of the Church, it is *this* about the *Messiahship* of the holy Jesus, which the *Discourse of the Grounds*, &c. has of late rais'd. I believe this Controversy will end in the absolute Demonstration of *Jesus's Messiahship* from Prophecy, which is the only Way to prove him to be the
B *Messiah*,

Messiah, that great Prophet expected by the *Jews*, and promised under the Old Testament. And tho' this Way of Proof from Prophecy seems to labour under many Difficulties at present; and tho' some *Writers* against the *Grounds*, being distress'd with those Difficulties, are for seeking Refuge in the Miracles of our Saviour; yet we must persist in it, till, what I have no doubt of, his *Messiahship* shall be clearly made out by it.

And the Way in Prophecy that I would take for the Proof of *Jesus's Messiahship*, should be by an allegorical Interpretation and Application of the Law and the Prophets to him; the very same Way, that all the Fathers of the Church have gone in; and the very same Way, in which all the ancient *Jews* say their *Messiah* was to fulfil the Law and the Prophets: But this Way does not please our ecclesiastical *Writers* in this Controversy, neither will they at present give any Ear to it.

The Way in Prophecy that they are for taking, is by a literal Interpretation and Application of some Prophecies of the Old Testament to our *Jesus*; but they are hitherto unsuccessful in this Way. The Authors of the *Grounds* and of the *Scheme*, grievously perplex them with their Objections against this Way of Proof, so far as,
being

being sensible, I say, of almost insuperable Difficulties in it, they are flying apace to the Miracles of our Saviour, as to their sole and grand Refuge.

But to shew that there's no Sanctuary for them in the Miracles of our Saviour, I write this *Discourse*: And this I do, not for the Service of Infidelity, which has no Place in my Heart, but for the Honour of the Holy *Jesus*, and to reduce the *Clergy* to the good old Way of interpreting Prophecies, which the Church has unhappily apostatis'd from, and which, upon the Testimony of the Fathers, will, one Day, be the Conversion of *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

For this Opinion, that there is no Sanctuary in the Miracles of our Saviour, I chanc'd to say in the *Moderator*, (1) *That Jesus's Miracles, as they are now-a-days understood, make nothing for his Authority and Messiahship.* And again, (2) *That I believe, upon good Authority, some of the Miracles of Jesus, as recorded by the Evangelists, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetic and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him:* Which Expressions gave Offence to some of our *Clergy*, and brought upon me their

(1) Page 44. (2) Page 53.

Indignation and Displeasure. I see no Reason to depart from the said Expressions, or so much as to palliate and soften them, much less to retract them ; but in Maintenance of my Opinion, to the Honour of our *Messiah*, and the Defence of Christianity, I write this Treatise on *Jesus's* Miracles, and take this Method following.

I. I will shew, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his Divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. That the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the Evangelists, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities ; consequently they, either in whole or in part, were never wrought, as they are commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetic and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

III. I shall consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles as to a Testimony and Witness of his Divine Authority, and shew, that he could not properly

perly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones, which he would do in the *Spirit*; of which those wrought in the *Flesh* are but mere Types and Shadows."

In treating on these Heads, I shall not confine myself only to Reason, but also to the express Authority of the Fathers, those holy, venerable, and learned Preachers of the Gospel in the first Ages of the Church; who took our Religion from the Hands of the Apostles, and of apostolical Men, who dy'd, some of them, and suffer'd for the Doctrine they taught; who professedly and confessedly were endu'd with divine and extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit; who consequently can't be supposed to be Corrupters of Christianity, or Teachers of false Notions about the Miracles of our Saviour, or so much as mistaken about the apostolical and evangelical Sense and Nature of them. I know not how it comes to pass, but I am a profound Admirer, and an almost implicit Believer of the Authority of the Fathers, whom I look upon as vast Philosophers, very great Scholars, and most orthodox Divines. Whatever they concurrently assert, I firmly believe. And tho' they are, for the most part, mysterious Writers out of the Reach of the Capacities

Capacities of many, who slight them; yet I, who have had the Honour and Happiness of much of their Acquaintance, fancy my self well apprised of their Meanings. If at any Time I read a Passage in them which I don't presently apprehend, I salute it with Veneration for all that, till my Understanding is open'd to receive the Sense of it. If I meet with but a single Opinion in any one of them, I pay my Respects to it; but where there is an Harmony and Agreement of Opinion amongst them, it is with me, and ought to be with all Christians, of such Weight, as to bear down all Prejudice, Opposition, and Contradiction before it; or the Authority of no Man, whether ancient or modern, is to have any Regard paid to it; and of what ill Consequence to Religion such an utter Rejection of Authority will be, I need not say.

This I thought fit to premise, concerning the Authority of the Fathers, to abate of the Prejudice beforehand, which some may conceive against the following *Discourse* about the Miracles of *Jesus*. I don't question, but some may be startled at the foregoing Heads, as if, what is the farthest of any thing from my Heart, the Service of Infidelity was in View; but craving the Temper and Patience of such Readers for a while,

a while, and they shall find, that it's no other than just Reasoning, clear Truth, and primitive Doctrine about *Jesus's* Miracles, that I advance : Or if it should so happen, that none besides my self should discern the Reasoning and Truth of the Argument ; yet I hope it will not be thought a Crime to revive primitive Doctrine, which none will be able to deny it to be, whether they like it or not. If I err, I err upon Choice with the Fathers, of whose Faith I am. And if any are offended at what follows about the Miracles of *Christ*, let them turn their Displeasure and Indignation against the Fathers, for whose express or implicit Opinions I can be deserving of no Blame.

I am sorry for the Occasion of such a Preface against Offence, which the Apostacy of the Age, and its Unacquaintedness with the Fathers, has made necessary. So I enter upon the particular handling of the Heads foregoing. And

I. I will shew, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the Messiah, nor are they so much as a good Proof of *Jesus's* divine Authority to found and introduce a Religion into the World.

And

And to do this, let us consider, first, in general, what was the Opinion of the Fathers about the Writings of the *Evangelists*, in which the Life of *Christ* is recorded. *Eucherius* says, (3) *That the Scriptures of the New as well as Old Testament, are to be interpreted in an allegorical Sense.* And this his Opinion, is no other than the common one of the first Ages of the Church, as might be proved by many the like Expressions of other Fathers. As in such Expressions, they do not except the Writings of the *Evangelists*; so they must include the History of *Christ's* Miracles, which as well as other Parts of the History of his Life, is to be allegoriz'd for the Sake of its true Meaning; consequently the literal Story of *Christ's* Miracles proves nothing.

But let's hear particularly their Opinion of the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour. *Origen* says, that (4) *Whatsoever Jesus did in the Flesh, was but typical and symbolical of what he would do in the*

(3) *Universam porro Sacram Scripturam tam Novi quam Veteris Testamenti ad allegoricum sensum esse sumendam, admonet nos vel illud, Aperiam os meum in Parabolis. In Prasat. ad Form. Spirit. Intell.*

(4) *Si quidem Symbola quædam erant quæ tunc gerebantur eorum, quæ Jesu virtute semper perficiuntur. In Mat. C. xv.*

Spirit ; and to our Purpose, (5) that *the several bodily Diseases which he healed, were no other than Figures of the spiritual Infirmities of the Soul, that are to be cured by him.* St. Hilary is of the same Mind with Origen, as any one may see by the (6) Expressions referr'd to, and his Commentary on St. *Matthew*. St. *Augustin* (7), and St. *John* (8) of *Jerusalem*, both say, that the Works of *Jesus* import farther Mysteries ; and with them, the rest of the Fathers agree, making the Miracles that *Jesus* did then, no more than the Shadow of some more powerful and mystical Operations to be done by him, as I could shew by more Citations out of them, if it were needful. But from the foregoing Citations out of the Fathers it is plain, in their Opinion, that our modern *Divines* are in the wrong of it, to lay much Stress on any of the Operations of *Jesus*, which

(5) Omnis Languor & omnis Infirmity quam sanavit Salvator tunc in Populo referuntur ad Infirmitates spirituales Animarum, &c. *In Mat. C. xvii.*

(6) Christi Gesta aliud portendunt. *In Mat. C. xii.* Evangelicis gestis est interior Sensus, C. xiv. Hæc licet in præsens gesta sunt, quid tamen in futurum significant contuendum est, C. x. Peragunt formam futuri gesta præsentia, C. xxi.

(7) Quæ a Jesu facta sunt, alicujus significantia erant. *Serm. 77.*

(8) Omne quod fecit Jesus, Sacramenta sunt, *Homil. 51. in Marc. 9.*

he did in the Flesh, for the Proof of his divine Authority and *Messiahship*, which is only to be proved by his more mysterious Works, of which those done in the Flesh are but Type and Figure.

But to come closer to the Purpose, let's see how indifferently, I had almost said contemptibly, the Fathers speak of the Miracles of *Jesus*, and particularly of his Power of healing all bodily Diseases, which by modern *Writers* is so much magnified and extoll'd. St. *Ireneus* says (9), that if *we consider only the then temporal Use of Jesus's Power of Healing, he did nothing grand and powerful*; consequently, *Ireneus* could not hold, that *Jesus's* Miracles then wrought, were a sufficient Proof of his divine Authority, much less of his *Messiahship*. Origen says (10) that *tho' many were brought to believe in Jesus upon the Fame of the Miracles which he did once among the Jews, yet* (what implies the Insufficiency of them for the Conversion of Men) *he intimates that his greater and mystical Works do prove his Authority*. St. *John of Jerusalem* says, (11) that *Je-*

(9) Si enim temporalis erat ab eo Utilitas, nihil grande præstitit iis, qui ab eo curati sunt, L. V. C. 12. S. 6.

(10) Contra Celsum, L. 11.

(11) Cœcum curavit, magnum quidem est, quod fecit; sed nisi quotidie fiat, quod olim factum, nobis quidem magnum esse cessavit. Homil. 30. in *Marc. 9.*
sus's

Jesus's Cures performed upon the Blind, &c. were indeed considerable and great, but unless he do daily as mighty Works in his Church, we ought to forbear our Admiration of him. St. Augustin not only says, (12) that if we examine into Jesus's Miracles by humane Reason, we shall find he did nothing great, considering his Almighty Power, and considering his Goodness, what he did was but little ; but he tells us also, that (13) such Works as Jesus did, might be imputed to, and effected by Magic Art. And accordingly Moses and our Saviour himself confess, that false Prophets, and false Christs, will do Miracles ; and Anti-Christ himself, according to St. Paul, will do them to the Deception of Mankind. Nay, the Fathers (14) say, what I believe, that Anti-Christ will imitate and equal Jesus in all his Miracles which he wrought of old. How then can we distinguish the true Prophet from the false, the true Christ from the Anti-Christ by Miracles ? Our Divines

(12) Si humano captu & ingenio consideremus Jesum facientem, & quod ad potestatem non magnum aliquid fecit, & quod ad benignitatem, parvum fecit. In Johan. Cap. V. Tract. 17.

(13) Et si attestabantur Miracula, non defuissent (sicut & nunc missitant) qui magicæ potentix cuncta illa tribuerent. Cont. Faust. L. XII, C. 49.

(14) Vid. Sanctum Augustinum de Anti-christo.

will find it hard to do it, if what the Fathers say of *Anti-Christ* be found true. Moreover, History affords us Instances of Men, such as of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, *Vespasian*, and of the *Irish Stroaker*, *Greatest*, who have miraculously cured Diseases to the Admiration of Mankind, as well as our *Jesus* : But if any of them, or any other greater Worker of Miracles than they were, should withal assume to himself the Title of a Prophet, and Author of a new Religion, I humbly conceive, we ought not to give heed to him.

Neither is there the least Reason that we should ; for the Power of doing Miracles is no certain, nor rational Seal of the Commission and Authority of a divine Lawgiver. St. Paul says (15) there is a *Diversity of the Gifts of the Spirit* ; for to one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wisdom ; to another the Word of Knowledge ; to another the Gift of Healing ; to another the working of Miracles ; to another Prophecy ; to another Discerning of Spirits ; to another divers Kinds of Tongues ; to another the Interpretation of Tongues. These Gifts may be given apart and separately. One of them may be conferr'd on this Man, and another of

(15) 1. Cor. C. xii.

them on his Neighbour. There is no Necessity that any two or more of these Gifts should meet in one Man. To argue then, that a Man, who has one of these Gifts, must have the other; that is, that he must needs have the Gift of Wisdom, or of Prophecy, or of Discerning of Spirits, or of divers Kinds of Tongues, because he has the Gift of Healing and of working Miracles, is very inconclusive, and false Reasoning: And yet this is the Reasoning of our modern Writers, who would prove *Jesus's* Authority to found a Religion from his Miracles. I don't question but *Jesus* had all the foresaid Gifts and Powers of the Spirit in a most superlative Degree; but then it is unreasonably inferr'd, for all that, that a Man, because he of Certainty has some of them, must of consequence have the other. St. *Augustin* (16) cautions us against being deceived into a good Opinion of a Man's Wisdom, because of his Power to do Miracles. And I think accordingly, that we may as well say, that the strongest Man is the wisest; or that a good Physician must needs be a good Casuist; or that

(16) Atque illud ad Rem maxime pertineat, ne decipiamur tendentes ad Contemplationem Veritatis—Arbitrantes ibi esse invisibilem sapientiam, ubi Miraculum visibile viderimus, *In Serm. Dom. in monte, Lib. 2. Sect. 84.*

the best Mathematician is the ablest Statesman, as that *Jesus*, because he was a Worker of Miracles, such as his are, and a Healer of all manner of Diseases, ought to be received as the Guide of our Consciences, the Director of our Understandings, the Ruler of our Hearts, and the Author of a Religion.

What then will the Writers against the *Grounds* do to prove *Jesus's* Authority and *Messiahship* from his Miracles? Or how by his Miracles will they be able to distinguish him from an Impostor, a false Prophet, and the *Anti-Christ*? Why, they will say perhaps,

1. That besides Greatness of Power, there was nothing but Goodness, Kindness, and Love to Mankind shewn in *Jesus's* Miracles. As to the Miracles of false Prophets and Impostors, if they be, many of them, of a kind and benevolent Aspect; yet the *Devil's* Foot, if we look well to it, will discover itself in some ludicrous and mischievous Pranks: But *Jesus's* Miracles were all of a beneficent Nature; he went about doing good, healing all manner of Diseases among the People, and did no Wrong to any one; which is a good Argument, they say, of his divine Authority, or God would not have suffer'd, nor the *Devil* have work'd such a Testimony in Behalf of

of it. On this Head our *Divines* are copious and rhetorical, and many notable and florid Harangues have they made on it. But

In answer to them, they don't seem to have their Memories at hand, when they declaim at this rate. The Fathers, upon whose Authority I write, will tell such Orators, that *Jesus*, if his Miracles are to be understood in the literal Sense, did not only as foolish Things as any Impostor could do, but very injurious ones to Mankind. I shall not here instance in the seemingly foolish and injurious Things which *Jesus* did for Miracles, intending under the next Head to speak to some of them: But they are such, if literally true, as our *Divines* do believe, as are enough to turn our Stomachs against such a Prophet; and enough to make us take him for a *Conjuror*, a *Sorcerer*, and a *Wizard*, rather than the *Messiah* and the Prophet of the most High God. But

2. To prove the *Messiahship* of the holy *Jesus* from his Miracles, our *Divines* urge the Prophecies of the Old Testament, such as that of *Isaiah*, C. xxxv. V. 5, 6. *Then the Eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopp'd; then shall the lame Man leap as the Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb sing; and say that these Prophecies were*
accurately

accurately fulfill'd by our *Jesus* in the several specifical Cures of *Blindness*, *Deafness*, *Lameness*, and *Dumbness*, which he often perform'd upon one or other; and, inasmuch as our Saviour seems to appeal to such Prophecies, do conclude this his Accomplishment of them, to be no less than a Demonstration that he was the true *Messiah*, that great Prophet, who was to come into the World. To which I answer,

First, That the Accomplishment of Prophecies that can neither be given forth by human Foresight, nor fulfill'd in a Counterfeit, are good Proofs of *Jesus's Messiahship*. But then, what shall we say, if others besides *Jesus* should do the like Cures and Miracles? It is said of *Anti-Christ*, and I believe it, that he will not only do all the Miracles that *Jesus* did, but will appeal to the like Prophecies too. How then we are to distinguish the *true* Christ from the *false* Christ by Miracles and Prophecies in this Case, is the Question which I leave with our *Divines* to consider of an Answer to, against the Time that it is proved that *Anti-christ* does all those Miracles which *Jesus* in the Flesh wrought. But

Secondly, The foresaid Prophecies, and others mention'd in *Isaiab*, neither were, nor could be Prophecies of the miraculous Cures of bodily Diseases, which *Jesus* then did.

did. And this may be made appear, not only from the Context of those Prophecies which received then no Accomplishment in *Jesus*, who ought to have fulfill'd one Part of the Prophecy as well as the other, or is not to be taken for the Fulfiller of either, but from the Opinion of both *Jews* and *Fathers*, who adjourn the Accomplishment of those Prophecies to Christ's spiritual Advent. But

Thirdly, The Prophet *Isaiah*, in the Place above cited, speaks not of bodily Blindness, &c. which the *Messiah* is to heal, but of the spiritual Distempers of the Soul, metaphorically so called; as may be easily proved, not only from the Prophecies themselves, but from the old *Jews*, who were allegorical Interpreters of those Distempers, and from the ancient *Fathers*, (17) who so understood them. Consequently our *Jesus's* healing of those bodily Diseases, was no proper Accomplishment of those Prophecies. It is true our Saviour, *Matt.* xi. 4, 5. seems to appeal

(17) Interim completur & Isaïæ Prophetia non tantum in corporalibus, verum etiam in spiritualibus, *Origen.* In *Matt.* Cap. xv. Aperientur igitur oculi cæcorum, aures surdorum audient, nam qui quondam divinis sermonibus rejeētis mysticam Sanctorum Institutionem recipere non studuerunt, libenter eam admittent, S. *Cyril* in *Loc.* II. Vide & *Sanctum Hieronymum* in *Loc.* Isaï.

to those Prophecies, and to make his Cure of corporal Distempers an Accomplishment of them : But he means not in the literal Sense, that our *Divines* take him in, as I shall shew hereafter, when I come to consider what *Jesus* means, by appealing to his Works and Miracles, as bearing Witness of him.

Our *Divines* then may admire and adore *Jesus* as much as they please for his Miracles of healing bodily Distempers, but I am for the spiritual *Messiah* that cures those Distempers of the Soul, that metaphorically pass under the Names of Blindness, Lameness, Deafness, &c. And the Cure of these spiritual Diseases, is the proper and miraculous Work of the true *Messiah*; for the sake of which, says (18) St. *Augustin*, *Jesus* condescended to do those little Miracles of healing bodily Distempers, which were but the Type and Shadow of his more stupendous Miracles of curing spiritual Diseases. The Cure of spiritual Infirmities is a God-like (19) Work, above the Imitation of Man or of *Anti-christ*, infinitely

(18) Et nunc majores sanitates operatur, propter quas non est designatus tunc exhibere illas minores. *In Serm.* 88.

(19) In quibus Spiritualibus maxime Christi Persona eminet. - *August.* *Quæst.* 2. in *Lucam*.

more

more miraculous than the healing any bodily Distempers can be.

Whether our *Jesus* be at this Day such a spiritual *Messiah*, I leave to our *Divines* to consider, with those spiritual Distempers of the Church, that seem to want his miraculous Hand and Touch. The Fathers of the Church said, that *Jesus* was *in part* such a spiritual *Messiah* in their time, and argued (20) his *Messiahship*, not from bodily Cures, but from his most miraculous Cures of the Diseases of the Soul: But there was another and future Time, in which he would be such a spiritual and glorious *Messiah* to the greatest Perfection. In the mean while, no healing of corporal Distempers can prove *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, nor any other of his miraculous Works recorded in the *Evangelists*: So far from it, that

II. I shall prove that the literal Story of many of *Jesus's* Miracles, as they are recorded in the *Evangelists*, and commonly believed by Christians, does imply Improbabilities and Incredibilities, and the grossest Absurdities, very dishonourable to the

(20) Modo Caro cæca non aperit oculos Miraculo Domini, sed cor cæcum aperit oculos Sermoni Domini. Modo non resurgit mortale cadaver, sed resurgit anima quæ mortua jacebat in vivo Cadavere, &c. *August. Serm. 88. S. 3.*

Name of Christ; consequently they, in whole or in part, were never wrought, but are only related as prophetic and parabolical Narratives of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

The reading of this Head will, I doubt not, strike with Horror some of our squeamish *Divines*, who, notwithstanding they will sacrifice almost any Principles to their Interest, will not bear that our literal evangelical History of such renown'd Miracles should be thus called in Question, and contemptuously spoken of. What does this *Author* mean, will some say, thus to do Service to Atheism and Infidelity? Away with him! Our Indignation is moved against him! No Censure and Punishment can be too severe for such Impiety, Profaneness, and Blasphemy, as is aim'd at, and imply'd in this Proposition.

To calm therefore the Spirits, and abate the Prejudices of such Accusers, I must proceed with the greater Caution, and with Reason and Authority well fortify myself before and behind, or I shall feel the Weight of the Displeasure of our *Divines*, who are prepossess'd of the Belief of the literal Story of all *Jesus's* Miracles.

Before then I enter upon the particular Examination of any of his Miracles, I will
 premise

premise two or three general Assertions of the Fathers about them. And first *Origen* (21) says, that in the historical Part of the Scriptures, *There are some Things inserted as History, which were never transacted, and which it was impossible should be transacted; and other Things, again, that might possibly be done, but were not.* This he asserts of the Writings of the *Evangelists*, as well as of the Old Testament, and gives many Instances to this Purpose. *St. Hilary* (22) says, *There are many historical Passages of the New Testament, that if they are taken literally, are contrary to Sense and Reason, and therefore there is a Necessity of a mystical Interpretation.* And *St. Augustin* (23) says, that *there are hidden Mysteries in the Works and Miracles of our Saviour, which if we incauti-*

(21) *Historia Scripturæ interdum interserit quædam vel minus gesta, vel quæ omnino geri non possunt; interdum quæ possunt geri, nec tamen gesta sunt. De Principiis, Lib. 4.*

(22) *Multa sunt, quæ non sinunt nos simplici sensu dicta evangelica suscipere. Interpositis enim nonnullis Rebus quæ ex Natura humani sensus sibi contraria sunt; Rationem querere cœlestis Intelligentiæ admonemur, In Matt. L. xx. S. 2.*

(23) *Evangelica Sacramenta in Christi factis signata omnibus non patent, & ea nonnulli minus diligenter interpretando afferunt plerumque pro salute Perniciem, & pro Cognitione Veritatis Errorem, &c. De Quæst. Divers. Quæst. 84.*

qually

ously and literally interprets, we shall run into Errors, and make grievous Blunders. Of the same Mind are the rest of the Fathers, as might be proved by express, or implicit Citations; but, studying Brevity, I think the three Testimonies above enough to cool the Rage, and assuage the Prejudices of my Adversaries against the Proposition before us, which I come now to a particular Consideration of; that is, to shew that the Story of many of *Jesus's* Miracles is literally absurd, improbable, and incredible. And

1. To speak to that Miracle of *Jesus's driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple*, which all the (24) four Evangelists make mention of.

I have read in some modern Author, whose Name does not occur to my Memory, that this was, in his Opinion, the most stupendous Miracle that *Jesus* wrought. And, in truth, it was a most astonishing one, if literally true, and *Jesus* must appear more than a Man, he must put on an awful and most majestick Countenance to effect it. It is hard to conceive, how any one in the Form of a Man, and of a de-

(24) *Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xix. John ii.*

spised

spised one too (and we don't read that *Jesus* chang'd his human Shape) with a Whip in his Hand, could execute such a Work upon a great Multitude of People, who were none of his Disciples, nor had any Regard for him. Supposing he could, by his divine Power, infuse a *panick* Fear into the People, yet what was the Reason that he was so *eaten up* with Zeal against the Profanation of that House, which he himself came to destroy, and which he permitted, I may say commanded, to be filthily polluted not long after. But not to form by my self an Invective against the Letter of this Story, let's hear what the Fathers say to it.

Origen makes the whole but a (25) Parable. His allegorical Expositions of it, are frequent, and one time or other he gives us the mystical Meaning of every Part of it. By the *Temple*, he understands the *Church*: By the *Sellers* in the Temple, he means such *Preachers* who make Merchandize of the Gospel, whom the Spirit of Christ, some time or other, would rid his Church of. He is so far from believing any thing of the Letter of this Story, that

(25) In Comment. in *Matt.* xxi.

he

he has form'd a (26) large Argument against it: The Substance of which is, that “ if
 “ *Jesus* had attempted any such thing, the
 “ People would have resisted, and executed
 “ their Revenge on him; if he had affected
 “ it, the Merchants of the Temple might
 “ have reproach'd him with Damage done
 “ to their Wares, and would have justly
 “ accused him of a Riot against Law and
 “ Authority.” Whether there is not Reason in this Argument of *Origen*, let any one judge.

(26) Potro cui curæ est accuratior Inquisitio considerabit, an juxta dignitatem præsentis Vitæ erat, ut *Jesus* rem talem auderet facere, extrudere videlicet Meacatorum Multitudinem, qui ad Diem festum ascenderant, Distributuri boves ditioribus, & tanto populo oves mactandas per domus familiarium, quæ multorum millium complerent numerum; atque eos qui in rebus talibus gloriantes producturi erant in medio Columbas, quas multi empturi erant, ceu in Conventu celeberrimo convivaturi. Considerabit hic etiam, an Nummulariorum erat non accusare *Jesum* contumeliose propter suas ipsorum effusas pecunias & mensas subversas. Quis autem flagello e funiculis verberatus & expulsus ab eo, qui penes eos habebatur viis, hunc adortus non inclamasset totis viribus sese ulciscens; cum præsertim haberet tantam multitudinem eorum, qui sibi æque contumeliam fieri credebant, faventem sibi adversum *Jesum*? Insuper consideremus, Dei filium funiculos fumentem; sibi que flagellum tenentem ad extrudendum e templo, annon repræsentet præter audaciam & temeritatem, inordinatum etiam quiddam? In *Johan.* Tom. XI.

St. Hilary

St. *Hilary* is of the same Mind with *Origen*. He says that this Story is only a (27) Prefiguration of what will be done in Christ's Church upon another Occasion; And he admonishes (28) us to search into the profound and mystical Import of every Part of it; particularly he hints that (29) by the Seats of those who sell Doves, may be understood the Pulpits of Preachers who make Sale of the Gifts of the Spirit, which is represented by a Dove. As to the Letter of the Story, he is plain enough, that there was no such (30) Market kept in the Temple of *Jerusalem*: And if any Historians besides the *Evangelists* had asserted it, I know of none, who would have been so foolish as to believe that Oxen and Sheep and Goats were there sold.

St. *Ambrose* too is for the Mystery, and against the Letter of this Story, saying, (31) what should be the Reason that *Jesus* should

(27) Præfiguratio futurorum dictis præsentibus continetur, *In Matt. xxi.*

(28) Admonemur altius Verborum Virtutes in istiusmodi significationibus contuendas, *Ibid.*

(29) In Cathedra est sacerdotii sedes; & eorum qui Spiritus Sancti Donum venale habent, Cathedras everter, *Ibid.*

(30) Non habebant Judæi quod venire possunt, neque erat quod emere quis posset, *Ibid.*

(31) Cathedra autem Vendentium Columbas cur everterit? Secundum Literam non intelligo. Admonet

should overturn the Seats of those that sold Doves? This must be, says he, a figurative Story, and signifies nothing less than the future Ejection of Priests out of his Church, who shall make Gain and Merchandize of the Gospel.

St. *Jerome*, as his Manner is in other Cases, gives us a literal Exposition of this Miracle, as far as it will bear it: But then corrects himself again, saying, there are (32) Absurdities in the Letter; but, according to its mystical Meaning, *Jesus* will enter his Temple of the Church, and cast out of it Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, who make a Trade of Preaching. And in another Place he tells us of the mystical Whip (33), that *Jesus* will make use of to this Purpose.

St. *Augustin* also is against the Letter of the Story of this Miracle, saying, (34)

monet Typo ejectorum de Templo hujusmodi Mercatorum, in Ecclesia Dei Confortium eos habere non posse, qui Sancti Spiritus Gratiam nundinentur, *In Loc. Luc.*

(32) Juxta simplicem Intelligentiam---quod penitus absurdum---cæterum secundum Mysticos Intellectus *Jesus* ingreditur Templum Patris & ejicit omnes Episcopos, Presbyteros, & Diaconos, &c. *In Loc. Mat.*

(33) Faciet Dominus Flagellum de Scripturarum Textuum Testimoniis. *In Zechar. C. xiv.*

(34) Non magnum Peccatum, si hoc vendebant in Templo, quod emebatur, ut offerretur in Templo, *In Loc. Johan.*

Where

Where could be the great Sin of selling and buying Things in the Temple, that were for the Use of it, and offer'd as Sacrifice in it? We must therefore, says he, look for the Mystery in this (35) figurative Story, and enquire what is meant by the Oxen, and Sheep, and Doves, and who are the Sellers of them in Christs Church; and he is very positive that Ecclesiasticks, who are selfish, and make worldly Gain of the Gospel, are here meant. And as to the Expression of *turning the Temple into a Den of Thieves*, he says it has Respect to the (36) *Clergy* in Time to come, who would make such a Den of Christ's Church.

Lastly, with the foregoing Fathers agrees St. *Theophylact*, who is an Allegorist too upon this Miracle, saying, that those (37) who sell Doves, are the Priests who sell spiritual Gifts; and that Christ some time or other would overturn their Seats, and clear his Church of them. In another

(35) Qui sunt tamen qui Boves vendunt? ut in figura quæramus Mystrium facti, qui sunt qui Oves vendunt & Columbas? ipsi sunt qui sua quærent in Ecclesia, non quæ Jesu Christi, *Ibid.*

(36) Vos enim fecistis Domum meum, Domum Negotiationis & Speluncam Latronum, significat futuros in Ecclesia, *L. II. Evang. Quæst. 48.*

(37) Διδάσκαλοι ὧν ἡ καταργίται λόγον, εἰ μὴ κέρδιον ἔχει, καὶ τότε τὴν τεταπίζαν ἀνατρίπει ὁ Κύριος. *In Johan. C. ii.*

Place, he intimates what are meant by Oxen and Sheep, *viz.* the literal Sense of the Scriptures. And if the literal Sense be irrational and nonsensical, the Metaphor we must allow to be proper, inasmuch as now-a-days, dull and foolish and absurd stuff we call Bulls, Fatlings, and Blunders.

Behold a wonderful Harmony among the Fathers in their Rejection of the literal, and Espousal of the mystical Sense of this Miracle. It is said of the Church in her first Ages, that she was inspired, and so she was; or before an Hire for the Priesthood was established, and pleaded for, she could never have written in this Fashion. If the Fathers had lived now, and written thus, we should have thought the Spirit of *Quakerism* was gotten amongst them, or they would never have given such an Exposition of this Story to favour an Enmity to an *Hireling Priesthood*.

How and when Christ's Power, according to the Figure and Parable before us, will enter his Church, and drive out of her these ecclesiastical Merchants, is not the Question. But whenever it does so effectually, it will be a stupendous Miracle, much greater than the typical one is supposed to be; and not only a Proof of Christ's divine Power and Presence in his Church, but an absolute Demonstration of his

his *Messiahship*, from his Accomplishment both of the foresaid Prophecies of the Fathers, and of other remarkable ones of the *Old Testament*, which will be then clearly understood, and which it is not my Business here to apply or mention.

Against the afore said Exposition of this Miracle, perhaps it may be objected, that (excepting a little Reasoning against the Letter of it) this is only the chimerical and whimsical Dream of the Fathers, whose Notions are obsolete, and who (38) *have adulterated Christianity with their Cant and Jargon*; and that none of our *Protestant* and Orthodox *Divines* have ever given into their Opinion.

I confess, that none of our Protestant *Divines*, whom I know, do embrace the foresaid Exposition of the Fathers, but it may be nothing the worse for all that: And tho' their Exposition may be very disagreeable to the Priesthood of this Age, yet I can tell them of the greatest Man of these last Ages, and that was *Erasmus*, who, cautiously expressing himself for fear of giving Offence to the *Clergy*, is of the same Mind with the Fathers; or he would

(38) *Chandler's Vindication*, &c. p. 145.

not say, that (39) *that Work of Jesus did prefigure somewhat else: For Jesus could not be zealous against the Prophanation of that Temple of the Jews, which was soon to be destroy'd, but meant to shew his Dislike and Hatred of ecclesiastical Covetousness, which, after the Way of the Type, he would take his Opportunity to rid the Church of.*

Before I dismiss this Miracle, I must observe, that if the Fathers are right above, then our *Latin* and *English* Translations of the Place in *St. Matthew* err in a main Point. Instead of reading, *and Jesus cast out them that sold and bought*, it should be, *those who sold and preach'd*; that is, sold what they preach'd: For the Word *ἀγορεύειν* does more properly signify to *preach* than to *buy*; and in this Sense here, according to the Fathers, it should be construed.

Again, I must observe, that our Commentators are a little perplex'd to know

(39) Hoc facto longe aliud significabat Jesus, nec enim illum tantopere commovebat Templum illud mercimoniis Boum, Ovium, Hircorum & Columbarum profanatum; sed ostendere voluit Avaritiam & Quæstum fore capitalem Pestem Ecclesiæ, quam Templum cujus Religio mox erat abolenda, figurabat— In nullum Hominum Genus acrius sæviit Jesus, sed hos ipse sibi servabit ejiciendos, cum videbitur. *In Loc. Matt. xxi.*

who,

who, and what those κολλυβίστων *Money-Changers*, were. The Greek (40) Word does import those who have a Knack to barter away little base and Brass Money, with the Effigies of an Ox or Bull on it, in exchange for good Coin. How applicable the Word was to any Merchants of the old Temple at *Jerusalem*, is hard to conceive. But it is very agreeable to our ecclesiastical *Collybists*, who, as I may appeal to Freethinkers, vend their Brazen-faced Bulls and Blunders at an extravagant and great Price. And if τετραπέζας, which is translated *Tables*, does properly signify (41) *Pulpits*, who can help it?

So much then on the Miracle of *Jesus's* driving the *Sellers* and *Buyers* out of the Temple. And now I appeal to our *Divines*, whether it be not an absurd, improbable, and incredible Story according to the Letter; and whether it be any other than, as the Fathers said of it, a prophetic and parabolical Narrative of what would be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*. And so I come to speak to a

2. Second Miracle of *Jesus*, and that is,

(40) *Vid.* Suicerum in Κολλυβίστης.

(41) Τετραπέζα, apud Aristophanem, est Pulpitum, *Vid.* Scapulam.

that

that of his (42) *casting the Devils out of the Madman or Madmen, and permitting them to enter into the Herd of Swine, which thereupon ran down a Precipice, and were all choaked in the Sea.*

To exorcise, or cast Devils out of the Possess'd, without considering the Nature of such a Possession, or the Nature and Power of the Devil, we'll allow to be not only a kind and beneficent Act, but a great Miracle. But then, be the Miracle as great as can be imagined, it is no more than what false Teachers, (43) *Workers of Iniquity*, and even some Artists amongst the *Jews*, have done before; consequently, such a Work of *Exorcism* in our Saviour, could be no Proof of his divine Authority. And if there was no more to be said against this Miracle, this is enough to set it aside, and to spoil the Argument of *Jesus's* divine Power from it. But there are many Circumstances in the Story, literally consider'd, that would induce us to call the Truth of the whole into question. How came those Madmen to have their Dwelling amongst the Tombs of a Burying-Ground? Where was the Humanity of the People, that did not take Care of them, in Pity to them, as well as

(42) *Matt. viii. Mark v. Luke viii.*

(43) *Luke xiii. ver. 27.*

for the Safety of others? Or if no Chains, as the Text says, which is hardly credible, could hold them, it was possible surely, as well as lawful, to dispatch them, rather than their Neighbours and Passengers should be in Danger from them. Believe then this Part of the Story who can? But what's worse, it's not credible there was any Herd of *Swine* in that Country. If any Historians but the *Evangelists* had said so, none would have believed it. The *Jews* are forbidden to eat Swine's Flesh; what then should they do with Swine (which are good for nothing till they are dead) who eat neither *Pig*, *Pork*, nor *Bacon*? Some may say, that they were kept there for the Use of Strangers: But this could not be, because that after the Time of *Antiochus*, who polluted the Temple with the Sacrifice of an *Hog*, the *Jews* (44) forbid, under the Pain of an *Anathema*, the keeping of any *Swine* in their Country. Perhaps it may be said, that the *Gadarenes*, so call'd from the Place of their Abode, were not *Jews*, but neighbouring *Gentiles*, with whom it was lawful to eat, and keep *Swine*. We will suppose so, tho' it is improbable; but then its unlikely (without better Rea-

(44) *Spencer de Legibus Hebræ, p. 117.*

son than at present we are apprised of) that our Saviour would permit the *Devils* to enter into a Herd of them to their Destruction. Where was the Goodness and Justice of his so doing? Let our *Divines* account for it, if they can. It is commonly said of our Saviour, and I believe it, that his Life was entirely innocent, that his Miracles were all useful and beneficial to Mankind, and that he did no Wrong to any one. But how can this be rightly said of him, if this Story be literally true? The Proprietors of the Swine were great Losers and Sufferers; and we don't read that *Jesus* made them amends, or that they deserv'd such Usage from him. The Proprietors of the Swine, it seems, upon this Damage done them by *Jesus*, desire him to depart out of their Coasts, to prevent farther Mischief; which was gentler Resentment, than we can imagine any others would have made of the like Injury. I know not what our *Divines* think of this Part of the Story, nor wherefore *Jesus* escaped so well; but if any *Exorcist* in this our Age and Nation, had pretended to expel the *Devil* out of one possess'd, and permitted him to enter into a Flock of Sheep, the People would have said that he had bewitch'd both; and our Laws, and Judges too of the
last

last Age, would have made him to swing for it.

Without Offence, I hope, I have argued against the Letter of this strange Story of the holy *Jesus*; I should not have dared to have said so much against it, but upon the Encouragement of *Origen* and other Fathers, who say, we ought to expose the Absurdities of the Letter, as much as may be, to turn Men's Heads to the mystical and true Meaning.

Let's hear then what the Fathers say to this Miracle. *Origen's* Commentaries on this Part of St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke's* Gospel, are lost; otherwise unquestionably he would not only have told us, that he believed no more of the Letter of this Story, than he did of the *Devil's* (45) taking our Saviour to the Top of a Mountain, and shewing him all the Kingdoms of the World; but, as he is an admirable *Mysticist*, would have given us curious Light into the Allegory and Mystery of it. But without *Origen*, we have enough in the other Fathers against the Letter of this Story.

St. *Hilary* reckoning up all the Parts of this Miracle together, says of it, that it is (46) typical and parabolical, and written

(45) *Lib. IV. De Principiis.*

(46) Hanc habeant Causam, ut esset in rebus gerendis futuri plena meditatio, *In Loc. Matt.* In hoc Typica ratio servata est, *Ibid.*

for our Meditation of what would be done hereafter by the holy *Jesus*. According to him, and other Fathers, the *Madman* is Mankind; or if they were two, they were *Jew* and *Gentile* at Christ's Coming, who may be said to (47) be *possess'd with Devils*, in as much as they were under the Rule of diabolical Sins, and subject to the Worship of *δαίμονια* false Deities, which we translate *Devils*. They were *so fierce* (48) *as no Chains could hold them*, because of their most furious Rage and Enmity to the Church, whom no Bonds of Reason could restrain from doing Violence to the Christians. They are said to be (49) *naked*, because they were destitute of the Cloathing of the Spirit and of Grace. And may be said to be *among the* (50) *Tombs*, because they were dead in Trespasses and Sins. After that *Jesus* had exorcis'd these diabolical Spirits out of the *Gentiles*, and brought them to their right Senses, which

(47) Significatæ sunt gentes quæ multis dæmonibus serviebant. *Augustin in Luc. Quæst.* 13.

(48) Humanum genus ad Adventum Domini vexabatur furore dementi, rumpens vincula rationis, *St. Amb. in Loc. Luc.*

(49) Nudus quicunque tegumentum Naturæ suæ & Virtutis amisit. *Amb. ibid.*

(50) In Tumulis Sepulchrorum; quid enim aliud sunt Corpora perfidorum, nisi quædam defunctorum Sepulchra in quibus Dei verbum non habitat, *Ibid.*

was upon their Conversion to the Faith ; then a *good way off*, some Ages after, did the like *Devils*, by divine Permission, enter into a (51) *Herd of Swine*, i. e. into *Hereticks* of impure Lives, and furious Natures. What sort of *Hereticks* are meant, or whether they are not to be understood of Christians in general, let our *Divines* consider. But one would be apt to think that *Ministers of the Letter* are included, because the *Letter* of the Scripture is mystically call'd (52) *Swines Food*. I am not obliged to pursue the mystical Interpretation of this Parable (for so I will call it) thro' all its Parts, nor to say what is meant by the Sea, that the *Swine* are to be absorp'd in; but leave our *Divines* to chew upon this mystical Construction given them in part, and to consider, whether there's not a Necessity for such an Interpretation to make the Story credible.

And thus have I given you the Opinion and Exposition of the Fathers upon this Miracle, which they turn all into Mystery. If our *Divines* are still for adhering to the

(51) *Videntes Dæmones non sibi jam locum in gentibus derelinqui, ut patiaturs habitare se in Hæreticis deprecantur. Hilar. in Loc. Matt.*

(52) *Litera est Palea, & frequenter evenit, ut homines hujus sæculi mystica nescientes, simplici Scripturarum Lectione pascuntur, Hieron. in Isa. xi.*

Letter of this Story, let them account for the Difficulties it is involv'd with. To cure Men violently distracted, and possess'd with *Devils*, is, whether it be miraculous or not, a good and great Work; but to send the *Devils*, who without *Jesus's* Permission could not go, into the *Herd of Swine*, was an Injury done to the Proprietors, and unbecoming of the Goodness of the holy *Jesus*. Neither is there any other Way to solve the Difficulty, than by looking upon the whole, with the Fathers, as Type and Figure.

If this miraculous Story had been recorded of *Mahomet*, and not of *Jesus*, our *Divines*, I dare say, would have work'd it up to a Confutation of *Mahometanism*. *Mahomet* should have been, with them, nothing less than a *Wizard*, an *Enchanter*, a *Dealer* with familiar Spirits, a sworn *Slave* to the Devil; and his *Musfulmen* would have been hard put to it to write a good Defence of him.

When our Saviour was brought before *Pilate* to be arraign'd, try'd, and condemn'd, *Pilate* put this Question to the *Jews*, saying, *What Evil hath Jesus done?* If both, or either of the Stories above, had been literally true of *Jesus*, there had been no need of false Witnesses against him. The Merchants of the Temple were at hand,

hand, who could have sworn " that he was
 " the Author of an Uproar and Riot, the
 " like was never seen on their Market-
 " Day; that they were great Sufferers
 " and Losers in their Trades; and, whe-
 " ther he or his Party had stolen any of
 " their Goods or not; yet some were
 " embezzled, and others damaged; and
 " all thro' the outrageous Violence of this
 " unruly Fellow, against Law and Au-
 " thority." If such Evidence as this was
 not enough to convict *Jesus* of a capital
 Crime, then the *Swine-Herds* of the *Ga-*
derenes might have deposed, " how they
 " believed him to be a *Wizard*, and
 " had lost Two thousand Swine through
 " his Fascinations: That he bid the De-
 " vils to go into our Cattle, is not to be
 " deny'd. And if he cured one or two
 " of our Countrymen of a violent Pos-
 " session, yet inasmuch as he did us this
 " Injury in our Swine, we justly suspect
 " him of diabolical Practices upon both."

Upon such Evidence as this, *Pilate* asks
 the Opinion of *Jews*, saying, *What think*
you? If they all had condemn'd him to
 be guilty of Death, it is no wonder, since
 there is not a *Jury* in *England* that would
 have acquitted any one arraigned and ac-
 cused in the like Case.

It is well for our literal *Doctors*, that such Accusations were not brought against *Jesus*; or their Heads would have been sadly puzzled to vindicate his Innocence, and to prove the Injustice and Undeservedness of his Death and Sufferings. But for this Reason, if no other, that no such Crimes were laid to his Charge, I believe little or nothing of either of the seemingly miraculous Stories before us, but look upon them both as prophetic and parabolical Narratives of what would mysteriously and more wonderfully, and consistently with the Wisdom and Goodness of *Jesus*, be done by him. And so I pass to a

3. Third Miracle of *Jesus*, and that is his *Transfiguration* (53) on the Mount. And this is the darkest and blindest Story of the whole Gospel, which a Man can make neither Head nor Foot of; and I question whether the Conceptions of any two thinking *Doctors* do agree about it. To say there is nothing in the Letter of this Story, we Believers must not, because St. *Peter* (54) says he was an Eye-witness of *Jesus*'s Majesty, saw his Glory on the Mount, and heard the Voice out of the

(53) *Matt.* xvii. *Mark* ix. *Luke* ix.

(54) *2 Pet.* i. 16, 17, 18.

Cloud. But as Infidels will be prying into the Conduct of *Jesus's* Life, and forming their Exceptions to the Credibility or Probability of this or that Part of it ; so we Chistians should be ready at an Answer, that might reasonably satisfy them ; and not forcibly bear down their Opposition, which will make no sincere Converts of them. And I believe they would easily distress us with Difficulties and Objections to the Letter of this Story.

St. *Augustin* himself (55) owns, that the whole of it might be perform'd by Magic Art ; and we know, in these our Days, that some Jugglers are strange Artists at the Imitation of a Voice, and to make it as if it came from afar off, when it is uttered close by us, and can cast themselves too into different Forms and Shapes, without a Miracle, to the Surprise and Admiration of Spectators.

But what, I trow, do our *Divines* mean by *Jesus's Transfiguration*. We read that his Countenance did shine like the Sun, and his Raiment was made as white as Snow, and that's all. And in this enough can we think, to demonstrate that Transaction, a miraculous *Transfiguration*? Phi-

(55) Possant Infideles istam Vocem delatam do Cœlo, per conjecturas humanas & illicitas Curiositates ad magicas Artes referre, *In Serm. xliii. §. 5.*

losophers will tell us, that the Reflections of the Light of the Sun, will change the Appearance of Colours, and to none more than Whiteness; and *Sceptics* will say, that it's no Wonder if the Countenance of *Jesus* look'd *Rubicund*, when the Sun might shine on it.

The Word in the Original for *transfigured*, is μεταμορφῶθι, that is, he was metamorphosed, transform'd, or, if you will, transfigured. And what is to be understood by a *Metamorphosis*, we are to learn not only from the natural Import of the Word, but from the ancient Use of it. Accordingly, it signifies nothing less than the Change or Transformation of a Person into the Forms, Shapes, and Essences of Creatures and Things of a quite different Species, Size, and Figure: But *Jesus*, it is conceived, was not so *transfigured*. Our *Divines*, I suppose, would not have him thought such a *Posture-master* for the whole World. If I, or any one else, should assert, that *Jesus* upon the Mount transformed himself into a Calf, a Lion, a Bear, a Ram, a Goat, an Hydra, a Stone, a Tree, and into many other Things of the animate and inanimate World, I dare say there would, among our orthodox *Divines*, be such Exclamations against me for Blasphemy, as
the

the like were never heard of. They, to be sure, will not hear of such a Transfiguration; nor, like good plain Believers, will bear any thing more than that *Jesus's Countenance did shine* like the Sun, and the Colour of his Vestments was changed; which whether it comes up to the Import of a *Metamorphosis* or not, they don't care.

But to close with our *Divines*, and acknowledge that the glorious Change of *Jesus's* Countenance, and of the Colour of his Vestments, was a true and proper Transfiguration, and that it was as real and wonderful a Miracle as could be wrought: But then we may, I hope, ask them, what was the particular Reason and Use of this Miracle? Was it a Miracle only for the sake of a Miracle? That's an Absurdity in the Opinion of (56) *St. Augustin*, who says, what is reasonable to think, that all and every one of *Jesus's* Miracles had its particular End and Use; or he who is the Wisdom as well as Power of God, had never wrought it. And what, I pray, was the Use of this Miracle? Of that the evangelical History is silent, and our *Divines*, with all their reasoning Faculties, can say nothing to it.

(56) Neque enim Miracula propter Miracula faciebat, sed ut illa quæ faciebat, mira essent videntibus, vera essent intelligentibus, *In Serm. xcvi. Sect. 3.*

And what did *Moses* and *Elias* on the Mount with *Jesus*? Was it in their own proper Persons that they appear'd? or were they only some Spectres and Apparitions in resemblance of them? It is said, that they were talking with *Jesus*; what then did they talk about? The three greatest Prophets and Philosophers of the Universe could not possibly meet and confer together, but on the most sublime, useful, and edifying Subject. It's strange that the Apostles, who over-heard their Confabulation, did not make a Report of it, and transmit it to Posterity for our Edification and Instruction. St. *Luke*, as our *English* Translation has it, seems to say, that they talked together of *Jesus's* *Decease* which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*; but this can't be the Meaning of St. *Luke's* (57) Words, which so interpreted, are no less than a *Barbarism*, and, I appeal to our Greek Criticks, an improper Expression of such Signification. We must then look for a more proper Construction of the Phrase in St. *Luke*, or we must remain in the Dark, as to the Subject that *Moses* and *Elias* talked with *Jesus* about.

But further, Why could not this Miracle have been wrought in the Valley as

Γ' (53) "Ἐλεγον τὴν ἕξιν αὐτῶν ἢ ἔμελλε πλεῖστον, C. ix. V. 31.

well as upon a Mountain, whither *Jesus* and his three Apostles ascended for the Work of it? Naughty *Infidels* will say, it was for the Advantage of a Cloud, which often moves and rests on the Tops of Mountains, to display his Pranks in. And why was it not done in the Presence of the Multitude, as well as of his three Apostles? The more Witnesses of a Miracle, the better it is attested, and the more reasonably credited; and there could not surely be too many Witnesses of this, any more than of others of *Jesus's* Miracles, if real ones. Ought not the unbelieving Multitude, for many Unbelievers unquestionably were amongst them, to have had a Sight and Hearing of this Miracle, as well as the Apostles? Who should rather see the Miracle, than those who wanted Conviction? Were they to take the Report of the Miracle upon the Word of the Apostles, who were Parties in the Cause? Our *Divines* may possibly say they ought: But *Infidels* and *Free-thinkers* would cry out against them, for juggling Tricks, and pious Impostures.

These are all Difficulties and hard Questions about the Miracle of Christ's Transfiguration, which our *Clergy*, who are Admirers of the Letter of that Story, are obliged to account for; and I believe it will

will be long enough before they give a proper and satisfactory Answer to many of them.

Let's hear then what the Fathers say to this miraculous Story of *Jesus's* Transfiguration. And it is agreed amongst them, that the whole is but a Type, (58) Prefiguration, and (59) ænigmatical Resemblance of a future and more glorious and real Transfiguration. And whenever they speak of any Part of the Story, they never explain to us how the Matter went upon Mount *Tabor*, but tell us of what *this* or *that* Part of it is figurative and emblematical; and how it is to be understood, and will be fulfill'd in future Time. As thus, by *the* (60) *six Days*, they understand six Ages of the World, after which a real and mysterious Transfiguration will be exhibited to our intellectual

(58) Regni cœlestis Honor præfiguratur, S. Hilar. in *Loc. Matt.* In Transfiguratione futura Regni Præmeditatio & Gloria demonstrata est, S. Hierom. in *Loc. Matt.*

(59) Ἀντύματῶδης παραδείξις τῆς βασιλείας. Anast. in *Transfig. Dom.* Ὑποδείγμα τῆς δόξης ἐκείνης. S. Chrysost. in *Loc. Matt.*

(60) Sex millium scilicet Annorum Temporibus evolutis, S. Hilar. in *Loc. Matt.* Sic post Sex Ætates Dominus a perfectis Famulis conspicietur, Dionys. Alex. apud Damascen. in *Orat. de Transfig.*

Views,

Views. By *Moses* and *Elias* (61) talking with *Jesus*, they mean the Law and the Prophets, upon an allegorical Interpretation, bearing Testimony unto Christ as the Fulfiller of them. By the (62) *Mountain* on which this future Transfiguration will be exhibited, they understand the sublime and anagogical Sense of the Law and the Prophets. By his *Transfiguration* itself, they mean his taking upon him, and passing through the Forms of all the Types of him under the Law, as of a Lamb, a Lion, a Serpent, a Calf, a Rock, a Stone, and of many others, which he is to fulfil, and which will then be clearly discern'd by us. By the black Cloud (63) that at present obstructs this Vision, they understand the Letter of the Old Testament. By the white (64) Vestments of *Jesus*, they mean the Words of the Scrip-

(61) Et Moses & Elias apparuerunt in Gloria, cum Jesu colloquentes, in quo ostenditur Legem & Prophetas cum Evangeliiis consonare & eadem Gloria spiritualis intelligentiæ refulgere, *Origen in Epist. ad Rom. c. 1.*

(62) Montem ascendit ut te doceat, ne quæras eum nisi in Legis & Prophetarum montibus, *Origen in Cantic. Cantic. Hom. 3.*

(63) Per nubem tetram intellige opacitatem Legis. *Damascen. in Orat. de Transfigur.*

(64) Vestimenta candida Jesu sunt Sermones & Scripta Evangeliorum. *Origen in Loc. Matt.*

tures,

tures, which will then shine clear and bright. By the Voice out of the Cloud, they mean, with *St. Peter*, the Word of Prophecy, that will sound in the Ears of our Apprehensions. And lastly, they tell us, that the Way to attain to the Sight of this glorious Vision, is by ascending (not by local Motion, but by Reason) to the Tops of the Mountain of the mysterious and sublime Sense of the Law and the Prophets. If we continue in the Plains and Vallies (65) of the Letter, like the Multitude under the Mountain, we shall never see *Jesus* in his shining Vestments, or how he was transform'd into the Types of the Law; nor *Moses* and *Elias* talking with him; nor the Law and the Prophets agreeing harmoniously in a Testimony to him.

After this fashion do the Fathers, one or other of them, copiously treat on every Part of this Transfiguration of *Jesus*. I could collect an almost infinite Number of Passages out of their Writings to this Pur-

(65) Si quis Litteram sequitur, & deorsum est totus, hic non potest videre Jesum in veste candida; qui autem sequitur Sermonem Dei & ad montana, id est, excelsa Legis conscendit, illi Jesus commutatur. — Quamdiu Litteram sequimur occidentem, *Moses* & *Elias* cum *Jesu* non loquuntur; sin spiritualiter intelligimus, statim *Moses* & *Elias* veniunt, id est Lex & Prophetæ, & colloquuntur cum Evangelio, *Johan. Hieros. Hom. 32.*

pose :

pose: But from these few it is plain, they look'd on the Story of Christ's Transfiguration, but as a Figure and Parable; and they were certainly in the right on't, in as much as this their Sense of the Matter, and no other, will solve the Difficulties before started against the Letter, as any one may discern, if he attentively review and compare one with the other: As, for instance, this their Sense and Interpretation lets us into the Reason of *Moses* and *Elias's* appearing on the Mount with *Jesus*; and gives us to understand what they talk'd about, and that was, not on *Jesus's* *Decease which he would accomplish at Jerusalem*, as our Translation has it, but on the Prophecy of the Old Testament; particularly, as *St. Luke* says, on *Moses's* Book of *Exodus*, and how he would fulfill it at the New Jerusalem.

Whether any, besides my self, does really apprehend, and is willing to understand this Story of Christ's Transfiguration, as I do, I neither know nor care. I am not bound to find others, Ears, Eyes and Capacities. What I have said is enough to shew the Sense of the Fathers about this Matter. If any dislike their concurrent Opinion of *Jesus's* Transfiguration's being an Emblem, an Enigma, and figurative Representation of a future and most glori-

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ous Transfiguration, such a one as they speak of; let him account for the Difficulties and Objections which I have before raised against the Letter of this Story. In the mean time I shall think it, literally, an absurd, improbable, and incredible one, and no other than a prophetical and parabolical Narrative of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by *Jesus*.

And thus I have considered *three* of the Miracles of our Saviour, and shewn how they are Absurdities, according to the Letter, consequently do make nothing for his Authority and *Messiahship*. I can and will do as much by his other Miracles; for I would not have any one think I am gotten to the End of my Tedder, but for some Reasons best known to my self, I publish these Remarks on these three first. After the *Clergy* have chew'd upon these a while, I will take into Examination some others of *Jesus's* Miracles, which for their literal Story are admired by them. As for instance.

I will take to task his Miracle (66) of *changing Water into Wine at a Marriage in Cana of Galilee*; which was the beginning of *Jesus's* Miracles, and should by rights have been first spoken to; but I am

(66) *John* ii.

almost

almost too grave to handle the Letter of this Story as I ought; and if I had treated it as ludicrously as it deserves, I don't know but at setting out, I should have put the *Clergy* quite out of all Temper. I would not now for all the World be so impious and prophane, as to believe, with our *Divines*, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story. If *Apollonius Tyanæus*, and not *Jesus*, had been the Author of this Miracle, we should often have reproached his Memory with it. It is said of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, that a Table was all on a sudden, at his Command, miraculously spread with Variety of nice Dishes for the Entertainment of himself and his Guests; which Miracle our *Divines* can tell him, makes not at all to his Credit, in as much as it was done for the Service and Pleasure of luxurious Appetites. But if *Apollonius* had done, as our *Jesus* did at this Wedding, they would have said much worse of him; and that, modestly speaking, he delighted to make his Friends thoroughly merry, or he would not be at the Pains of a Miracle to turn so much Water into Wine, after they had before *well drunk*. If the Fathers then don't help us out at the mystical and true Meaning of this Miracle, such farther Objections may be

form'd against the Letter, as may make our *Divines* ashamed of it.

I will also take into Examination *Jesus's* Miracle (67) of *feeding many Thousands in the Wilderness with a few Loaves and Fishes*; which, according to the Letter, are most romantick Tales. I don't in the least question *Jesus's* Power to magnify or multiply the Loaves; and, if he pleas'd, to meliorate the Bread: But that many thousands of Men, Women, and Children, should follow him into the Wilderness, and stay with him three Days and Nights too, without eating, is a little against Sense and Reason. Whether the Wilderness was near to, or far from the People's Habitations, the Difficulties attending the Story are equally great. I wonder how *Jesus* amused them all the while, that they had the Patience to stay with him without Food; but I much more wonder, that no Victuallers besides the *Lad* with his Loaves and Fishes, of whom, and his Occupation, whether it was that of a *Baker* or *Fishmonger*; and of his Neglect of his Master's Business here; and of the Reason that he met with no hungry Chapmen for his Bread before, we shall make some Enquiry; but particularly why he alone, I

(67) *Matt*, xiv. and xv, &c.

say,

say, and no other Viſtuallers, no other Retailers of Cakes and Gingerbread followed the Camp. In ſhort, for all the imaginary Greatneſs of the Miracle (which there is a Way to reduce and leſſen) of *Jeſus's* feeding his Thouſands with a few Loaves, there muſt be ſome Faſcination or Enchantment (condemn'd by the Laws of the *Jews* as well as of other Nations) in the Matter; or the People, if they had ſtay'd one Day, would not two, much leſs three *to faint*, but would, eſpecially the Women and Children, have been for returning the firſt Night home. We muſt then ſeek to the Fathers (who ſay the five Books of *Moſes* are the *five Barley Loaves*, &c. and the ſeptiform'd Spirit, the *ſeven Loaves*, &c.) for a good Notion of this Miracle, and if they don't make it a Parable; do what our *Divines* can, it will turn to the Diſhonour of the holy *Jeſus*.

I will alſo conſider the Miracle of *Jeſus's* (68) *curing the Man ſick of the Palsy, for whom the Roof of the Houſe was broken up, to let him down into the Room where Jeſus was, becauſe his Bearers could not enter in at the Door for the Preſs of the People.* This literally is ſuch a *Rodomon-tado*, that were Men to ſtretch for a Wa-

(68) *Mark ii, Luke v.*

ger, against Reason and Truth, none could out-do it. Where was the Humanity of the People, and wherefore did they so tumultuate against the Door of the House? It's *strange* they had not so much Compassion on the *Paralytick*, as to give way to him: It's *more strange* that his Bearers could get to the Top of the House with him and his Bed too, when they could not get to the Door, nor the Sides of it: It's *yet stranger*, that the good Man of the House would suffer his House to be broken up, when it could not be long e're the Tumult of the People would be appeas'd: But *most strange*, that *Jesus*, who could drive his Thousands out of the Temple before him, and draw as many after him into the Wilderness, did not, by Force or Persuasion, make the People to retreat, but that such needless Trouble and Pains must be taken for the miraculous Cure of this poor Man. Let's think of these Things against the Time, that out of the Fathers I prove this Story to be a Parable.

I will also take into Consideration the Miracle of *Jesus's* curing *the* (69) *blind Man*, for whom *Eye-salve* was made of *Clay and Spittle*; which *Eye-salve*, whether it was balsamick or not, does equally

affect the Credit of the Miracle. If it was naturally medicinal, there's an End of the Miracle; and if it was not at all medicinal, it was foolishly and impertinently apply'd, and can be no otherwise accounted for, than by considering it, with the Fathers, as a figurative Act in *Jesus*.

I will also take into Consideration the several Stories of *Jesus's* raising of the Dead; and, without questioning his actual bringing of the Dead to Life again, will prove from the Circumstances of those Stories, that they are parabolical, and are not literally to be apply'd to the Proof of *Jesus's* divine Authority and Messiahship; or, for instance, *Jesus*, when he raised *Jairus's* (70) Daughter from the Dead, would never have turned the People out of the House, who should have been his best and properest Witnesses.

I will also consider the Miracle of *Jesus's* (71) *cursing the Fig-tree*, for its not bearing Fruit out of Season; which, upon the bare Mention of it, appears to be a foolish, absurd, and ridiculous Act, if not figurative.

I will also consider the (72) Journey of the wise Men out of the East, with their

(70) *Mark* v.
(72) *Matt.* ii.

(71) *Matt.* xxi.

Mark xi.

(literally)

(literally) senseless and ridiculous Presents of *Franckincense* and *Myrrh*, to a new-born Babe. If with their *Gold*, which could be but little, they had brought their *Dozens* of Sugar, Soap, and Candles, which would have been of Use to the Child and his poor Mother in the Straw, they had acted like wise as well as good Men. But what, I pray, was the Meaning and Reason of a Star, like a *Will-a-Whisp*, for their Guide to the Place, where the holy Infant lay. Could not God, by divine Impulse, in a Vision or in a Dream, as he ordered their Return home, have sent them on this important Errand; but that a Star must be taken or made out of Course to this Purpose? I wonder what Communication passed between these wise Men and the Star, or how they came to know one another's Use and Intention. But the Fathers shall speak hereafter farther to the Senselessness of this Story literally, and make out the Mystery and true Meaning of it.

I will also, by the Leave of our *Divines*, take again into Consideration the miraculous Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, and the Resurrection of *Jesus* from the Dead. I do believe, if it may so please our *Divines*, that *Jesus* was born of a pure Virgin, and that he rose from the Dead: But speaking too briefly, in the
Moderator,

Moderator, to these two Miracles, they took Offence. I will therefore give them a Review, and speak home to them; particularly to Christ's Resurrection, the evangelical Story of which, literally, is such a Complication of Absurdities, Incoherences, and Contradictions, that unless the Fathers can help us to a better understanding of the *Evangelists* than we have at present, we must of necessity give up the Belief of it.

These and many (73) other of the historical and miraculous Parts of *Jesus's* Life, will I take into Examination, and shew, that none of them literally do prove his divine Authority; so far from it, that they are full of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities; but that his whole Life in the Flesh, is but (74) Type, Figure, and Parable of his mysterious and spiritual Life and Operations in Mankind.

In the End of this Head, it will be a curious and diverting Subject to examine the Miracles of *Jesus*, as they are literally understood, by the Notions, which our

(73) *Alia quamplurima his similia in Evangeliiis inveniet, quicunque attentius legerit. Origen. de Principiis, lib. iv.*

(74) *Quæ Enarratio erit Evangelii sensibilis, nisi accommodetur ad intelligibile & spirituale? Nulla sane. Origen. in Præfat. ad Johan. Evang.*

Divines have advanced about Miracles; and to shew, that even their Notions, compared with Christ's Miracles, are destructive of his Authority, and subversive of Christianity. This, I say, would be a most diverting Undertaking, and it will be strange, if some *Free-thinker*, that loves Pleasure of this kind, does not take the Hint, and snatch the Work out of my Hands. If I do it myself, I shall have especial Regard to the Writers against the *Grounds*, without passing by Mr. *Chandler's Essay on Miracles*; on which the more Remarks will be made, if it be but to pay my Respects to the *Archbishop's* Judgment, and to shew my Admiration at those extravagant Praises which his *Grace* at *Lambeth* has bestowed on that Author. Among other his notable Notions of a Miracle (and the *Archbishop* says he has (75) *set the Notion of a Miracle upon a clear and sure Foundation*) one is, (76) *That Miracles should be Things probable as well as possible, that they do not carry along with them the Appearance of Romance and Fable, which would unavoidably prejudice Men against believing them.* This

(75) See *Archbishop Wake's Manuscript Letter to Mr. Chandler, which is handed about Town and Country.*

(76) *Chandler's Vindication, &c. p. 81.*

is certainly a good and right Notion of a divine Miracle; and I don't doubt, but according to it, Mr. *Chandler* and the *Archbishop* think, they can justify the literal Story of our Saviour's Miracles, against the Charge of *Fable* and *Romance*: But whether they are able to do it or not, I shall go on, in some Discourses hereafter to be publish'd, to prove that our *Divines*, by espousing the Letter of Christ's Miracles, have deceived themselves into the Belief of the most arrant *Quixotism* that can be devised and palm'd upon the Understandings of Mankind. I say, they have deceived themselves; for neither the Fathers, nor the Apostles, nor even *Jesus* himself, meant that his Miracles, as recorded in the *Evangelists*, should be taken in a literal Sense, but in (77) a mystical, figurative and parabolical one. And this should bring me to the

III. Head of my Discourse; that is, to consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Works and Miracles, as to a Witness and Testimony of his divine Authority; and to shew, that he could not properly and truly refer to those supposed

(77) Dominus noster ea quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam spiritualiter volebat intelligi, &c. *August. Serm. xcvi. Sect. 3.*

to be wrought by him in the *Flesh*, but to those mystical ones, he would do in the *Spirit*, of which those seemingly wrought by him in the *Flesh*, are but Types and Shadows.

But this Head can't be rightly spoken to, till I have more amply discuss'd the former, which, by God's Leave, I promise to do: And if my *courteous Readers* will be so kind as to trust me till that Time, I assure them to prove, that no Ignorance and Stupidity can be greater, than the Imagination that *Jesus* really appeal'd to his Miracles, supposed to have been wrought by him in the *Flesh*, as to a Witness and Testimony of his Divine Authority, and *Messiahship*.

In the mean time our *Divines* may go on in their own Way, if they think fit, and admire *Jesus* of old, and celebrate his Power and Praises for healing of bodily Diseases, and doing other notable Feats according to the Letter of the evangelical Story; but I am for the spiritual *Jesus* and *Messiah*, who cures the worse (78) Dis-temperers of the Soul, and does other mysterious and most miraculous Works, of which, those recorded in the Evangelists,

(78) Quos in corporibus morbos sanavit Christus, hi in animabus existunt, & supernam ejus opem requirunt, *Jehan, Nepot. Hieros. Hom. LXI.*

are

are but Figure and Parable. This is the primitive and concurrent Opinion about the true *Messiah*, which the Fathers universally adhere to. Whether our *Jesus*, at this Day, be such a spiritual *Messiah* to his Church, or whether she does not stand in need of such a one, is the Question that our *Divines* are to see to. But I will add here, what I believe, and shall have another Opportunity to prove, that God on purpose suffer'd or empower'd *false* as well as *true* Prophets, *bad* as well as *good* Men, such as *Apollonius*, *Vespasian*, and many others, to cure Diseases, and to do other mighty Works, equal to what are literally reported of *Jesus*, not only to defeat us of all Distinction between true and false Miracles, which are the Object of our bodily Senses, but to raise and keep up our Thoughts to the constant Contemplation of *Jesus's* spiritual, mysterious, and most miraculous Works, which are the Object of our Understandings; and loudly bespeak the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God; and which are to be the absolute Demonstration of *Jesus's* divine Authority and *Messiahship* to the Conversion of *Jews* and *Infidels*.

I have no more to do at present, but, like a *Moderator*, to conclude with a short Address and Exhortation to *Infidels* and

and *Apostates*, the two contending Parties in the present Controversy. And

First, To *Apostates*, I mean the Writers against the *Grounds* and *Scheme*. Whether you, *grave Sirs*, who account yourselves Orthodox *Divines*, tho' there is little but Contradiction and Inconsistency amongst you, do like the Name of *Apostates* which is given you, I much question: But it is the properest, I could think of, for your Desertion of primitive Doctrine about Prophecy and Miracles. I could, not improperly, have given you a worse *Title*, but I was willing to compliment you, rather than reproach you with this.

But setting aside the Title of *Apostates*, whether it be, in your Opinion, opprobrious or not; you may plainly perceive, that I am, *Sirs*, on your Side, as to the Truth of Christianity; and if you'll accept of my Assistance for the Proof of *Jesus's* Messiahship from Prophecy, upon the Terms of the allegorical Scheme, proposed in my *Moderator*, you shall find me your hearty Abettor. Upon the allegorical Scheme, I don't doubt but we shall soundly drub and maul *Infidels*, and beat them out of the Field of Battle. If you, being wedded to the literal Scheme, will not accept of my Assistance, you may go on in your own Way,

Way, and see the Event of the Controversy, which in the End will turn to your Dishonour.

You, *Sirs*, can't but be sensible, how those two great Generals, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*, with their potent Armies of Reasons and Authorities against your literal Prophecies, have grievously distress'd and gall'd you; and, if you don't make an honourable Retreat in time, and seek to *Allegorists* for Help, will gain a compleat Victory and Triumph over you.

Instead of the Help of *Allegorists*, you, I find, under the Disappointment of your literal Scheme, chuse rather to have Recourse to *Jesus's* Miracles: But what little Dependence there is upon his Miracles, in your Sense, I have *in part* proved in this *Discourse*; and this I have done (give me leave repeatedly to declare it) not for the Service of your unbelieving Adversaries, but to reduce you to the good old Way of interpreting Oracles, which, upon the Testimony of the Fathers, will one Day be the Conversion of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

Whether you, *Sirs*, will be pleas'd with this short *Discourse* on Christ's Miracles, I much question. But before you put yourselves in a Rage against it, I beg of you to read St. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, *Origen*,
 St.

St. Hilary, St. Augustin, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, St. John of Jerusalem, St. Theophylact, and other occasional ancient Pieces on one Part or other of the *Evangelists*; and you'll find how they countenance such a *Discourse* as this on Miracles; and will abundantly assist me in the Prosecution of it.

I expect, *Sirs*, that some of you will be ready to rave against me for this Discourse; but this is my Comfort, that if your Passion should arise to another Prosecution of me, you can't possibly separate any of mine from the Opinions of the Fathers to ground a Prosecution on: And what Dishonour in the End will redound to Protestant and pretendedly learned *Divines* of the Church of *England*, to persecute again the Fathers for primitive Doctrine, I desire you to think on.

But, as I suppose, you'll have more Wit, *Sirs*, than to prosecute me again for this *Discourse*; so I hope you'll have more Ingenuity, than odiously (after your wonted manner) to represent me to the Populace, for Profaneness, Blasphemy, and Infidelity. If you dislike the whole or part of this Discourse, appear like Men and Scholars, from the *Press* against it. Use me as roughly in Print as you think fit, I'll not take it ill.

Veniam

Veniam petimus, dabimusq; vicissim.

I desire nothing more than to be furiously attack'd from the *Press*, which, if I am not much mistaken, would give me a long'd for Opportunity to expose your Ignorance to more Advantage.

Be no longer mistaken, *good Sirs*. The History of *Jesus's* Life, as recorded in the *Evangelists*, is an emblematical Representation of his spiritual Life in the Soul of Man; and his Miracles are Figures of his mysterious Operations. The four Gospels are in no Part a literal Story, but a System of mystical Philosophy or Theology.

If you are resolved not to come into this Opinion, I beg of you again, before you break forth into a Passion, to try to vindicate the literal Story of the three Miracles spoken to in this Discourse, *viz.* those of *Jesus's driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; of his exorcising the Devils out of the Madman; and of his Transfiguration on the Mount*; which if you are able to defend against the Fathers, and my Objections, I'll give up the Cause to you, and own my self (what I am far enough from being) an impious Infidel and Blasphemer, and deserving the worst Punishment. In the mean time, I make bold

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again

again to assert, that the literal Story of Christ's Life and Miracles, is an absurd and incredible Romance, full of Contradictions and Inconsistencies; and that modern Paraphrases are not only a consequential Reflection on the Intellects of the *Evangelists*, and their divine Gifts of the Spirit, as if they could not write an intelligible and coherent Piece of Biography without your Help at this Distance of Time; but have even darken'd and obscured the seemingly native Simplicity of the Story of the Life of *Jesus*. So leaving you to chew upon this, I turn

My Address to *Infidels*, particularly to the two most renown'd Writers of the Party, Mr. *Grounds*, and Mr. *Scheme*. I should, *Gentlemen*, by right, salute you, with the Title of *Free-thinkers*, a proper Name for your philosophical Sect, who are for the free Exercise of your Reason about divine and speculative Points in Theology. And I had distinguish'd you by this Title from your apostatical Adversaries, but that I had a mind to oblige my old Friends the *Clergy*, in giving you a no more honourable Title than I do them. And I trust you will not be offended

fended at the Title of *Infidels*, since not only your Writings seem to have a Tendency to Infidelity; but, if there be any Fault in your Principles, you know how to charge it on your Adversaries, the pretended Advocates for Christianity, whose Absurdities, false Reasonings, Inconsistencies, and foolish Glosses on the Scriptures, have occasioned your Departure from the Faith in Christ.

I thank Mr. *Scheme* for the noble Present of his Book, which I received and read with Pleasure. But instead of one, he should have sent me a *Dozen* for the Use of Friends and Borrowers, who are very curious and importunate for the Perusal of it. For what Reason he envies the *Booksellers* the publick-Sale of his Work, chusing rather to give it away *gratis*, than that they should reap any Profit by it, I know not. Surely it is not to bring an *Odium* on the *Clergy* for Persecutors, as if such an useful and philosophical Piece might not appear publicly without Danger from them: If so, I hope the *Clergy* will resent the Indignity, and invite him to a Publication of his Book, with a Promise of Impunity, which would wipe off the Reproach, which this clandestine Method of disposing of it has cast on them.

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I once almost despair'd, *Sirs*, of seeing such another Piece from your Quarter. I was afraid the Prosecution of the *Moderator* would have deterr'd you from the Press, whereby our excellent Controversy on Foot must have been drop'd : But the sudden and unexpected Appearance of Mr, *Scheme*, has revived me, and rejoiced the Cockles of my Heart. Go on then, *great Sirs*, in this Controversy, which Mr. *Grounds* happily commenc'd; and if you are deny'd the Liberty of the Press, and publick Sale of your Books, I hope you'll, for all that, as occasion offers it self, oblige the Learned and Curious with some more of your bright Lucubrations, tho' you print them, and dispose of them in this clancular and subtil Method.

It is not that I wish well to your Cause of Infidelity, that I thus encourage you. You have more Sense and Reason, than to suspect me tainted with unbelieving Principles. Christianity will stand its Ground against your battering Armour; and the Church of Christ will be the more firmly establish'd on a Rock of Wisdom, for that Opposition you make to it. Tho' you will entirely vanquish the literal *Schemists*, and ride in Triumph over them, yet other Defenders of the Faith, call'd *Attegorists*,

gorists, will arise to your Confutation and final Overthrow.

If I am not mistaken, *Sirs*, your Adversaries, the literal *Schemists*, whom I call *Apostates*, are about making a Retreat, and yielding the Field of Battle to you. The *Bishop* of *Lichfield*, the greatest General on their Side, will not only find it hard to levy any more Forces in Defence of his *twelve* literal Prophecies; but he knows that, if he draws his Sword any more against you, he must attack too the Authority of the Fathers for the allegorical Interpretation of some of those Prophecies, already urg'd in my *Supplements* to the *Moderator*; or, if the Fathers are neglected by him, they and I, keeping out of the Reach of his *Bug-Bear*, will treat him with such familiar Language, as never was given to one of his Order.

Mr. *Scheme* seems to promise us a Discourse on the Miracles in the Scriptures; I hope he'll be as good as his Word, and e're long publish it. This Discourse of mine can't possibly supersede his. As I question not but his Thoughts and Remarks on Miracles will be very considerable; so I shall be a little impatient till I see them. But be his Discourse on Miracles

cles of what kind soever, I believe it will hardly be an Obstruction to my Undertaking in hand, which I intend, by God's Leave, to go on with, to the Honour of the holy *Jesus*, our spiritual *Messiah*, to whom be Glory and Praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

